

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 048231
ORIGIN EUR-12

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
USMISSION USBERLIN
AMCONSUL GOTEBORG
AMEMBASSY BERLIN

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E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: CVIS, CG"N, ETRN, PFOR, GE, SW

SUBJECT: GDR CRUISE SHIP VOELKERFREUNDSCHAFT

REF: STOCKHOLM 792(NOTAL)

1. EMBASSY STOCKHOLM SHOULD RESPOND TO QUESTIONS
REGARDING THE CANCELLATION OF PORT CALL BY GDR CRUISE
SHIP TO SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO BY POINTING OUT THAT USG
HAD APPROVED REQUEST FOR PORT CALL AND HAD AT NO TIME
DENIED THE VESSEL PERMISSION TO ENTER PORT.

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2. REASON GIVEN TO SWEDISH PASSENGERS FOR "DENIAL, OF
ENTRY IE. THAT THERE HAD BEEN AN ATTACK ON A SOVIET
SHIP AND THAT USG COULD NOT GUARANTEE SAFETY OF
PASSENGERS AND CREW OF VOELKERFREUNDSCHAFT REFLECTS
EITHER CONFUSION ON THE PART OF THE GDR OR DELIBERATE
DISTORTION OF TRUE FACTS.

3. DEPARTMENT OFFICERS CALLED IN GDR EMBASSY POLITICAL COUNSELOR SEVERAL WEEKS BEFORE INTENDED CALL BY VOELKERFREUNDSCHAFT TO CLARIFY QUESTION OF PHYSICAL SECURITY OF VESSELS IN US PORTS. POLITICAL COUNSELOR WAS TOLD THAT USG WAS NOT DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR ASSURING SAFETY OF SHIPS, CREWS AND PASSENGERS IN US PORTS (INCLUDING US VESSELS) AND THAT ANY SECURITY PRECAUTIONS DESIRED SHOULD BE ARRANGED BY SHIP'S AGENT IN PORT OR BY VESSEL MASTER. DEPARTMENT OFFICERS NOTED THAT THERE WAS NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT ANYTHING UNTOWARD WOULD OCCUR WHILE VOELKERFREUNDSCHAFT WOULD BE SAN JUAN. HOWEVER, THERE HAD BEEN TWO SERIOUS INCIDENTS INVOLVING THE SOVIET PASSENGER VESSEL MAKSIM GORKIY IN PREVIOUS YEARS (THE LAST BEING IN NOVEMBER 1975). IN VIEW OF THE SERIOUS NATURE OF THESE INCIDENTS AND THE FACT THAT NO GDR VESSELS HAD EVER CALLED AT US PORTS, DEPARTMENT HAD DESIRED TO MAKE SURE THAT GDR WOULD BE AS FULLY INFORMED AS POSSIBLE ON ALL ASPECTS OF PORT CALL PROCEDURES, INCLUDING SECURITY MEASURES.

5. ON JANUARY 5, 1977 US COAST GUARD INFORMED DEPARTMENT THAT THE SAN JUAN AGENT FOR THE VOELKERFREUNDSCHAFT HAD NOTIFIED THE COAST GUARD THAT THE VESSEL HAD CANCELLED ITS INTENDED CALL. THE AGENT GAVE NO EXPLANATION FOR THE CANCELLATION AND SAID THAT ANY QUESTIONS SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO THE GDR SHIPPING COMPANY WHICH OPERATES THE VESSEL.

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6. DEPARTMENT PLANS TO RAISE THIS MATTER WITH GDR EMBASSY HERE AND WILL EXPRESS OUR DISAPPOINTMENT THAT

EFFORTS TO PROVIDE GUIDANCE ON SECURITY MATTERS HAD BEEN USED TO MAKE USG SCAPEGOAT FOR LAST MINUTE CANCELLATION OF PORT CALL AND RESULTANT UNHAPPINESS OF THE SWEDISH PASSENGERS.
VANCE

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Sent Date: 04-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
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